

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The invention is intended to solve the problem of a phase shift by the incidence angle dependence of a composite wave plate which is caused when divergent light is incident directly thereon because of occurrence of a phase shift in addition to a desired phase difference of the composite wave plate. The composite wave plate is composed of two laminated wave plates, and respective parameters are set such that: letting θ_1 represent the azimuth angle of the optical axis of the first wave plate with respect to the plane of polarization of incident light thereon in the Poincare sphere representation, θ_2 represent the azimuth angle of the optical axis of the second wave plate with respect to the plane of polarization of incident light thereon in the Poincare sphere representation, Γ_1 represent a phase rotation about the axis of rotation R_1 of the first wave plate in the Poincare sphere representation, and Γ_2 represent a phase rotation about the axis of rotation R_2 of the second wave plate in the Poincare sphere representation,

$$\theta_2 - \theta_1 \neq \pi/2;$$

and that a phase difference Γ_T of the composite wave plate satisfies

$$\Gamma_T = (2 \times \theta_1 - \pi/2) \cos \Gamma_1 + (2 \times \theta_2 - \pi) \cos \Gamma_2.$$